



## DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

### News Release

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GOVERNOR

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#### **WILDLIFE BIOLOGISTS PROBE MYSTERY OF MISSING ALBATROSS COLONY IN NORTH WAI'ANAE MOUNTAINS -- Community help sought with information**

HONOLULU – Wildlife biologists monitoring a little-known Laysan Albatross colony at Kuaokala in the Northern Wai'anae mountains discovered on Tuesday that the entire colony of up to 50 birds has disappeared in the last month.

No remains of any birds were found despite the colony being fenced for protection against predators. When predation by pigs or dogs has occurred in the past, remains are typically scattered throughout the colony, providing a calling card that allows biologists to identify the responsible predator.

The lack of carcasses and the absence of adults on the colony, who come back even when chicks are not present, suggest that human interference cannot be ruled out as the cause of this colony's rapid demise.

State biologists as well as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service enforcement personnel, searched the colony for hours yesterday but did not find anything.

Biologists plan to return with specially trained dogs in an attempt to locate any carcasses.

At their last visit in mid February, biologists counted 15 chicks, six nests with eggs and 20 adults present in the colony.

Laysan Albatross are protected by state and federal laws under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and killing or possessing them is illegal. They are one of the few native seabird species that still nest in the main Hawaiian Islands, and are an attraction to many residents and tourists alike who often visit Ka'ena Point to catch glimpses of these majestic birds.

Albatross are very tame and unafraid of people or other animals which makes them vulnerable to predation. They also do not breed until they are eight years old, and will raise only one chick per year. As a result, it can take decades for a new colony to form.

It has taken the Kuaokala colony close to 20 years to reach a size of 50 birds and may take just as long for it to recover from this recent catastrophic loss.

DLNR is asking that persons who may have information on any suspicious activities that may have occurred at Kuaokala between February 13, 2009 to March 23, 2009 please contact the DLNR Division of Conservation and Resources Enforcement (DOCARE) at **643-DLNR** (3567) or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement division at (808)861.8525 or, who are both investigating this case.

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For more information news media may contact:

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